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THE POLISH QUESTION



BY

F. A. VOIGT

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THE POLISH QUESTION

I

THE Russian *Declaration* of January 11th¹ has uncovered the biggest political crisis of the Second World War so far. All Europe is looking on. The conflict between Russia and Poland does not concern the 'Curzon Line,' it does not really concern the frontiers of Poland or her demographic structure.

The questions are not :

Shall her eastern border be shifted westward ? Shall she lose her eastern territories, or, losing them, acquire in their place, western territories at the expense of Germany ?

The question is : *Shall Poland exist ?*

Beyond this, there is another question : Shall Europe exist—the Europe we have known, and hope to know again, the Europe for which the War is being fought, the Europe which alone gives the War any meaning, a Europe that is neither anarchy, nor servitude, the Europe that is a balanced and integral whole, the Europe of systems and ideas, varied and yet related, the Europe of many sovereign states, big and small, the Europe that is so much more than a geographical expression, Europe, the stronghold of the Graeco-Roman and Christian heritage ? That is *the* question.

Without Poland there can be no such Europe. That is why, in September, 1939, England and the Empire went

¹ For official text v. *The Times*, January 12th, 1944.

to war. The threat to Polish independence was a threat to Europe. The threat to Polish independence is still a threat to Europe, no matter whence it comes. The threat was twofold in 1939, for hardly had Poland been invaded from the west, when she was invaded from the east and, for the fourth time in her history, partitioned—this time between Russia and Germany.

To-day the threat is twofold still. What the Russians, in effect, demand is this : that Great Britain and the United States recognise the Partition accomplished in connivance with the Germans. But with this difference, that, whereas the eastern half of Poland is to be annexed by Russia, the western regions shall form a vassal state on the border of the Soviet Union.

The *Drang nach Osten* was thrown back at Stalingrad. It has now been succeeded by the *Drang nach Westen*. Poland is the victim of the one, as of the other. But not Poland only. Three recent events mark the opening moves, as it were, of the *Drang nach Westen* : the appointment of Tito as ' Field Marshal ' and head of a rival ' Government ' in Yugoslavia, the treaty between Russia and Czechoslovakia, and the Russian *Declaration* of January 11th.

The *Declaration* is not at all ' conciliatory,' as it is made out to be ; it is not devised to bring the conflict between Poland and Russia to an end. It is devised to accentuate the conflict, to increase the fearful pressure to which Poland has so long been subjected, and *force her to accept terms incomparably harsher than any terms which Great Britain and the United States would think of imposing on a defeated Germany*. The terms, if accepted, would mean the end of Polish independence.

The Russian *Declaration* is not mere propaganda,

though it contains propaganda. It is not a mere statement of policy. It is a formidable political action, undertaken by one of the most formidable of Great Powers.

Let us examine the *Declaration* in detail :

It twice refers to the Polish Government as 'emigre. The term 'emigre' has been endowed with derogatory meaning by Russian propaganda as well as by world-wide propaganda that serves the interests of Russia. The term 'emigre' when so used of a Government in exile is meant to convey that such a Government is not representative 'democratic,' popular, or legitimate, no matter whether it is really so or not. The term is used of every exiled Government which the Russians do not favour. It is not used of the Norwegian Government, for example, nor of the Czechoslovak Government. There was a time when the Czechoslovak Government had not, as yet, found favour in Moscow, and was therefore qualified as 'emigre.' The Yugoslav Government in exile was not 'emigre' until Russia had begun to disapprove of its policy. Nor was the Polish Government 'emigre' when the military situation in Russia was so critical that the help of every possible Ally was needed.

The term 'emigre' might seem a title of honour. The Allien Governments who are 'emigre' left their countries because they refused to surrender and were resolved to continue the fight on the side of England against Germany. *Poland was fighting on England's side during the darkest days of the war, when France had fallen and she stood alone.* The Polish Air Force played a glorious part in the Battle of Britain, Polish soldiers and sailors showed marvellous skill and valour in the common cause. Yugoslavia dared to reject the alluring terms offered by the enemy. She came into the war on the side of Great

Britain after France had fallen and before Russia was an Ally. Nevertheless both the Polish and Yugoslav Governments were qualified as 'emigre' with disparaging intent and damaging effect—so powerful is ingratitude, and gratitude so weak.

To the Russians, the term 'emigre' recalls those who fled from Russia during the revolution, and conspired against the newly established regime. They were represented as 'reactionaries' and enemies of 'the people.' The term 'emigre,' therefore, which is placed in the first and final paragraphs of the *Declaration*, gives it a polemical twist, although the term is in itself correct.

Is the Polish Government in London 'reactionary' or 'undemocratic' or unrepresentative of the Polish people, as it is made out to be?

When a Government is exiled from its own country and when that country is occupied by a hostile army, there can be no elections and no effective legislation. How, then, can *any* such government be 'representative' or, if it is so, be sure that it remains so?

It can, by wireless and by courier, be in close touch with its own nation, and can follow the trend of public opinion. When the nation is united against an external foe (as the Poles are) and when there is an efficient secret organisation that embodies the national will (as there is in Poland), then the Government in exile can be 'representative' as a kind of delegation abroad or as a trustee.

The Polish Prime Minister is a peasant of humble origin. Polish industrial labour is 'represented' by Socialists, of whom one is a member of the Jewish 'Bund' which favours a radical form of Socialism.¹ On the whole *the Polish*

¹ To be fully 'representative,' the Polish Government should include few Ukrainians. It does not, however if it did the conflict with Russia would be further exacerbated—and the British Foreign Office further embarrassed.

Government is as 'representative' as is humanly possible. If seen through a medium undistorted by propaganda, it appears on balance, moderate, democratic, 'Leftish.' Although the machinery of popular representation cannot operate in Poland, the Government could be repudiated overnight by the Polish people, who, through their organisations can unmistakably give effect to their will. Even if the Polish Government wished to accept the Russian claim to Eastern Poland it could not do so, because *the people of Poland are uncompromising in their refusal to sacrifice national territory*—just as the people of England would be, if she were unhappy enough to find herself in a similar situation. In this there is no difference between the Polish 'Right,' 'Middle' and 'Left.' All are equally hostile, not only out of personal conviction, but also out of the knowledge that if they were to sign away Polish territory, they would be repudiated by the Polish people.

It is stated in the Russian *Declaration* that 'the territories of Western Ukraine . . . and the territories of Western Byelorussia' [the names given by the Russians to the eastern half of Poland] 'were incorporated in the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Byelorussia' [and therefore in the Soviet Union] 'in accordance with the will of the population . . . as expressed in a plebiscite, which was carried out on a broad democratic basis in 1939.' Let us examine this statement.

II

Poland was invaded by Russian troops without a declaration of war on September 17th, 1939.¹ The Russians occupied the eastern half of Poland by arrange-

¹ *The Nineteenth Century and After*, June, 1943, v. below the last page.

ment with the Germans, who held the western half. The Russians set up a military and civilian administration and divided the occupied territory in two districts, calling them 'Western White Russia' and 'Western Ukraine', and treating them as extensions of the White Russian¹ and Ukrainian Soviet Republics which are part of the Union of Soviet Republics.

The heads of the administration were mostly Russians from the Soviet Union, though a few Polish Communists were admitted. The Polish police were replaced by Russian militiamen. Law courts were suppressed, and many Polish schools and churches were closed down. As in the Baltic States later on, so in Eastern Poland, vast numbers of citizens were arrested and deported to Russia with their families.

The deportations which began almost immediately, went on for many months. They were carried out in accordance with an elaborate system, which appears to have been essentially the same in Poland as in the Baltic States later on. All 'anti-Soviet elements,' as the Russians called them, were liable to arrest and deportation. These included magistrates, police, judges, lawyers, members of Parliament, prominent members of political parties (and all members of parties and organisations of a real or supposedly anti-Russian character), members of patriotic leagues and societies, persons in any way associated with the outside world—such as representatives of foreign firms, persons employed by foreign legations, consulates, or chambers of commerce, persons engaged in trade or correspondence with foreign countries, former members of the Red Cross, former civil servants, priests, members

¹ White Ruthenian and White Russian are alternative appellations.

of the nobility, merchants, industrialists, landowners, and owners of hotels and restaurants.¹

The deportations in Eastern Poland were not confined to Poles, but also to White Ruthenians and Ukrainians. Almost all the Ukrainian political leaders, in particular the leaders of the UNDO (Ukrainian National Party), were deported. So were many Ukrainian farmers and peasants.

For a comprehensive account of these deportations a whole volume would be needed. They make up one of the most awful tragedies of our time. We cannot, here, do better than give the brief summary of the main facts, which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*.²

‘These unfortunate people were transported in cattle trucks hundreds and thousands of miles into the remote and desolate regions of Asiatic and Arctic Russia. Many of them died on the way. The rest were imprisoned or put in labour camps or on collective farm in Kazakstan and elsewhere. Some were forced to work in mines in Karaganda and Kolyma, others along the Trans-Siberian Railway or in brickworks and sawmills in many districts of Central Russia. Thousands died from overwork, illness, and under-nourishment—particularly the old people and young children . . . They were forced to live in overcrowded barracks without sanitation, in stables, earth huts, and even pig-sties without light or heating in many cases. Those who were too old or ill to work usually received

1 We have in our possession a copy of an official document—an order of the Russian Commissary of the Interior at Kowno (November 28th, 1940, No. 0054)—which classifies ‘anti-Soviet elements’ according to fourteen categories and numerous sub-categories. It may seem queer that stamp-collectors and esperantists could be considered dangerous, but they are entered in category 10, i.e., ‘persons in personal relations or in correspondence with foreign countries, with foreign Legations or Consulates, Esperantists and Philatelists.’

2 *The Manchester Guardian*, December 23rd, 1943.

no food or money and had to be maintained by their families or friends. Quite small children thus often supported their aged or ailing relatives. The mortality of these children was fearful. Precise figures are unobtainable, but it is estimated that between 25 and 30 per cent. succumbed of about 180,000 children deported from Poland and roughly 30,000 from the Baltic States. Many families were broken up and dispersed to different regions—wives were separated from husbands and children from their parents.'

We have mentioned these deportations, which had begun before the 'plebiscite' held by the Russians in Eastern Poland (and subsequently in the Baltic States), because they exercised a powerful influence on the vote, seeing that persons who, by their words or actions before and during the poll, could be classified as 'anti-Soviet' were, therefore, liable to deportation.

III

The ethnography of Eastern Poland is disputed. We give the Polish official figures, though with the proviso that these figures have been challenged by some authorities.

According to the Polish census of the year 1931, Eastern Poland, that is to say the Polish territories occupied by the Russians in 1939, had a population of 13,200,000 :—

5,274,000 Poles (40 per cent.)

4,841,000 Ukrainians (36·7 per cent.)

1,596,000 White Ruthenians (12 per cent.)

1,109,000 Jews (8·4 per cent.)

(the remainder is made up of Russians, Germans, Lithuanians, Czechs and others).

The elections for 'Popular Assemblies' to represent the Polish White Ruthenian and Ukrainian territories were

held on October 22, 1939. Space does not allow us to describe in detail the complicated procedure by which elections of a type unknown in Poland, were organised in about a fortnight. Only a few days were allowed for dividing a population of 12,662,000 people¹ in 2,424 constituencies. The electorate was not made really aware what the 'Popular Assemblies' were for. The Municipal Council of Lwow did issue a statement that the Assemblies were to decide upon the future national status of the Polish Ukraine. A similar statement was published in the Russian newspaper *Izvestia*. But the population as a whole cannot have known what really was afoot. The citizens of Lwow probably knew. Perhaps that is why, when the elections came, they produced such a meagre poll. It is hardly conceivable that the primitive peasants of remote villages in White Ruthenia could have known.

The *Election Committees* were composed of persons who were, for the most part, strangers. It may be that local Communists had a share in them, but it must at best have been a very humble share. The elections were organised by the Russian military and civil administration under the superintendence of the Russian higher authorities. Many Russian officials—including members of the NKVD (Secret Police)—arrived from Moscow as organisers.

The candidates were not chosen by the electorate. They were appointed by the Russian authorities and were, as a rule, persons quite unknown in the constituency. Many, if not most, were *Politruks* (Political Officers) who had been sent from Russia. Some factories tried to put forward their own candidates, but were invariably overruled by the 'Politruks.' In some constituencies the candidates were members of the Russian military and civil adminis-

¹ Those residing in the region ceded to Lithuania being excluded.

tration. In one constituency, the candidates were Mr. Molotov and Marshal Voroshiloff.¹ In some of the rural constituencies the candidates were illiterate.

While multitudes of the electorate—Polish, Polish Ukrainian and White Ruthenian political leaders and organisers—were being deported to Russia, many persons arrived from Russia not only to organise but also to vote as ‘permanent or temporary residents.’ Agitators were also imported from Russia.² Speeches and lectures, and propagandist plays (some of them with well-known Russian casts) were given. ‘Propaganda trains’ of the kind used in Russia during the revolution, were sent to Poland. Russian troops took part in the canvassing—the soldier agitator was here and there and everywhere.³

The propaganda was directed against imperialism and capitalism, against the Polish land-owning class, in particular, against Ukrainian nationalism, and, of course, for the Soviet Union and its achievements.

The polling was as follows :—

There was only one name—the name of the one candidate—on the ballot paper. There was a screen, behind which voters could retire to mark their papers. Some did so, crossing out the name of the candidate, or scribbling some comment of their own on the paper. But they were observed, and a mark would often be put against their names in the register. In some polling stations, voters were ‘advised’ by the officials present—Russian militiamen, soldiers, agents of the NKVD, or an occasional local

¹ Constituency IV, Krzemieniec (*Pravda*, October 19th, 1939) It does not appear that Mr. Molotov and the Marshal ever showed themselves in this constituency.

² 100,000 agitators were drafted into White Ruthenia (*Pravda*, October 22nd, 1939), in Zolkiev there were 600 agitators for 11,000 inhabitants (*Pravda*, October 15th).

³ *Izvestia*, February 2nd, 1940.

Communist—to drop their papers into the ballot without going behind the screen. Many persons arrived who had no identity card and were not on the register, and were yet allowed to vote. Their names were entered in the register subsequently. Many Russian soldiers voted.

The voting, though theoretically free, was in practice compulsory. Agents of the NKVD would call on persons who did not appear, and warn them. They feared that if they did not vote they would be deported to Russia.

The votes were counted by 'Regional Committees' appointed by the 'Russian authorities. The 'Regional Committees' forwarded their returns to the 'Central Committees' similarly appointed. The electorate had no means of checking the counts. The published results were :

	Electorate	Votes
Western Ukraine . . .	4,776,275	4,433,997 or 92.83 per cent.
Western White Ruthenia .	2,763,191	2,672,280 or 96.71 per cent.

In some localities, when noon approached, and none or few turned up to vote, Russian troops or militiamen rounded up the constituents and escorted them to the polling station. In some districts the polling was preceded by numerous arrests. In some, many of the younger men fled and disappeared in the forests.

Returns were published for regions made up of several constituencies and for some of the larger towns, but none for individual constituencies.

In some villages there was much abstention, but it was not to be traced in the returns. In Lwow the poll amounted to only 43.8 per cent. The Russian authorities ordered a new election—it was never held.²

Out of 1,495 candidates for all Eastern Poland, 1,484

¹ *Pravda*, October 25th, 1939.

² *Pravda*, October 25th, 1939.

were returned. Many of them—especially those from White Ruthenia—were illiterate.

The returned candidates formed the two National Assemblies—the White Ruthenian and the Ukrainian—which met at the end of October. The latter was attended by Marshal Timoshenko. Both Assemblies passed the following resolutions—not by ballot, but by a show of hands, and unanimously.

1. That 'Western White Russia' and 'Western Ukraine' pass into the hands of the working class.

2. That 'Western White Russia' and 'Western Ukraine' be 'admitted' to the Soviet Union.

3. That the big estates be confiscated.

4. That the banks and industries be nationalised.

5. That homage be paid to 'the great Stalin.'¹

This was the plebiscite referred to in the Russian *Declaration* of January 11th, 1944. In this way Eastern Poland was annexed by Russia.

The three Baltic States were similarly annexed in the year 1940.

According to the *Declaration*, 'the injustice committed by the Riga Treaty of 1921 . . . was in this way rectified . . . the incorporation of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia (White Ruthenia) in the Soviet Union not only did not violate the interests of Poland, but, on the contrary, created a reliable basis for stable and permanent friendship between the Polish people and its neighbours the Ukrainians and Byelorussians (that is to say, with the populations of the annexed territories and, thereby, with the Soviet Union itself) . . .'²

¹ *Pravda*, October 28th, 29th, 30th, 1939.

² Before they were enlarged by the annexation of Eastern Poland, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Republics of the Soviet Union comprised 21.22 per cent. and 3.22 per cent. respectively of the total population of Soviet Russia, *v. Census of 1926 (The U.S.S.R. in Figures, Soyuzorgoutchot, Moscow, 1934)*.

“The Soviet Government has repeatedly declared that it stands for the re-establishment of a strong and independent Poland and for friendship between the Soviet Union and Poland.”

By this incorporation Poland lost 51·6 per cent. of her territory, 37·3 per cent. of her population, more than half her timber, about half her chemical industry and of her peat for fuel, more than 40 per cent. of her water power, about 85 per cent. of her oil and natural gas, her potassium mines, phosphates and most of her grain. It is not easy to see how such losses in territory, population and wealth could be conducive to strength and independence, and to ‘friendship’ with the Power which had inflicted them.

IV

Let us examine the thesis advanced by the Russians, that the majority of the inhabitants of Eastern Poland are brethren’ of their ‘neighbours,’ the White Ruthenians and Ukrainians across the Russian border, and that to incorporate them in the Soviet Union was therefore just. It is commonly represented as the exercise of the right of self-determination. It is true that these ‘brethren’ are ethnologically akin. But it does not follow that to join them within the Soviet Union is to apply the principle of self-determination.

The two principles—ethnological kinship and self-determination—are entirely distinct. The ethnological principle, which is but Hitler’s racial doctrine, would, if consistently applied, incorporate Holland, Flanders, German-speaking Switzerland, as well as Austria and the Sudetenland, in the German Reich. The German-speaking Swiss do not want to become Germans, and to incorporate them in the German Reich, in accordance with the racial

doctrine, would violate the principle of self-determination. If that doctrine were to be accurately applied, Switzerland would be partitioned between Germany, France and Italy.

Poland, like Switzerland, is a multinational state—so is Russia—only 52·91 per cent. of the inhabitants of the Soviet Union are Russians.¹ *The White Ruthenians and Ukrainians of Poland do not want to be incorporated in the Soviet Union*—they did not want to in 1939, and they do not want to now, indeed, less than ever now, after their experience of Russian domination from September 1939 to June 1941.

Although they—and especially the Ukrainians—were not contented under Polish rule, they have come to realise that Polish rule is preferable to German or Russian rule. *When war came, the White Russian and Ukrainian troops were loyal to the Polish State.* It is true that when the Germans invaded Russia, they found support amongst those Polish Ukrainians who dreamed of becoming part of a Ukrainian Empire, extending from the Caucasus into Central Europe, but independent of Moscow. The Polish Ukrainians were completely disillusioned, both by their German masters, and by their 'brethren' in the Soviet Ukraine, who contrary to German expectations, were loyal to the Russian State. They found that with these 'brethren' they had nothing in common. They might be amongst their 'brethren': they were no longer in Europe.

The Eastern Polish frontier is the dividing line between two civilisations. The White Ruthenians and the Ukrainians who live west of the frontier are different to the point of mutual incomprehension from those who live east of the frontier. West and east of this frontier lie different worlds.

1 *The U.S.S.R. in Figures* (Soyouzorgoutchot, Moscow, 1934).

The Russia of to-day is a new civilisation—a civilisation unique in the world. Poland belongs to the west—to Christendom. We do not suggest that Christendom is better than non-Christendom, but only state that they are different.

Poland was partitioned three times before 1939 and each partition was regarded as a crime by the civilised world.¹ But the difference between her and Russia is far greater than it was in the eighteenth century—the century of the Three Partitions.² The crime to-day would be incomparably greater than it was then, because the victims would be incorporated in a State which is much more alien, by comparison with their own, than it was then. The consequences, in terms of change, displacement, of re-adaptation of human suffering would be much greater, the more so, because the means of coercion at the disposal of a modern state are much more formidable than those at the disposal of the eighteenth century state.

Reasons of ethnology and of racial doctrine in the affairs of nations are not reasons of justice or humanity—least of all are they reasons of genuine brotherhood.

The injustice and inhumanity to-day would be far greater even than it would have been as recently as in 1921, when the present eastern frontier of the Polish Republic was drawn. In 1921, Russian civilisation was not developed as it is to-day. Poland, too, was in a less advanced state than the subsequent years of constructive

1 Cf. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's tremendous indictment of the Second Partition (speech in the House of Commons, April 25th, 1793).

And one might add: Sheridan is as fierce in his denunciation of the partitionings carried under Catherine the Great as he would have been of the partitioning carried out under Stalin, had he been living to-day.

2 1772, 1793, 1795.

national effort were to make her. The two civilisations were not so deeply differentiated then as they are now. This is particularly so with regard to religion. Poland is Christian, Russia is secular. The White Ruthenians, who are politically the most primitive amongst the inhabitants of the Polish Republic and have little sense of nationhood, have a strong sense of religion.

The Polish Republic is not as integrated as some of the multinational states, like Switzerland, for example, and Great Britain. But the Republic had existed only a score of years when the Second World War came, and had not the time needed for complete integration—always a gradual process. But she had achieved a great measure of integration. Twofold invasion and twofold occupation have been the severest possible test of integral nationhood. Poland has stood that test as no other country occupied by the enemy has stood it. Another partition would be yet another tearing asunder of a living community, a community more closely knit together in spirit than even before.

V

The Russian *Declaration* refers to the eastern frontier of the Polish Republic as 'the injustice committed by the Treaty of Riga.' It was as fair a frontier as could be devised, as we shall try to show. The *Declaration* does not insist upon precisely the frontier claimed by Russia as the result of the 'plebiscite' in 1939, the frontier of the Fourth Partition, the so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov line, which had been agreed upon between Hitler and Stalin shortly before the Second World War. The *Declaration* insists upon 'approximately' the *Curzon Line*, which is more favourable to Poland in so far as

it would deprive her of a little more than a third of her territory instead of one-half.¹

But even if the 'Curzon Line' had been fair when it was proposed in 1919, it would be so no longer, for the integration of the Polish State has advanced since then. But it was not fair even then. We shall not here discuss the proposal that bore the name of Lord Curzon except to state that the Line follows the eastern boundary of the homogeneously Polish region² and the western boundary of the heterogeneous Polish, White Ruthenian, and Ukrainian area, that a fair Line (as fair, that is to say, as can humanly be to Poland, to Russia, and to the populations immediately concerned) would pass about half-way through the heterogeneous area. Such a line was, in fact, drawn under the Treaty of Riga, the line that became the frontier between the Polish and Russian Republics, the line that is the legal frontier between them still.

The Russian *Declaration*, in referring to the frontier agreed upon at the Riga Conference as 'unjust,' and implying that the 'Curzon Line' would be just, is refuted by Russian evidence. Although the Russian armies were advancing victoriously against the Poles in July, 1920, yet when Great Britain offered to mediate and proposed the

1 Bialystock would remain Polish. But under the 'plebiscite' in 1939 it voted by an 'overwhelming majority' for incorporation in the Soviet Union. If the Russian contention is accepted, the 'workers and peasant' of Bialystock would once more become the 'slaves' of the Polish 'landowners and capitalists'.

2 Alternative extensions of the Curzon Line (the Botha lines, A and B) were proposed for Eastern Galicia, the one excluding and the other including of Lwow in the Polish Republic. Lwow is the third Polish city, so that its exclusion or inclusion are important. The Russian *declaration* does not indicate which alternative is demanded.

Curzon Line,'¹ Chicherin, in his reply, stated that 'the Soviet-Government expresses its willingness to a territorial frontier more favourable for the Polish people.'²

The Russian-Polish war was only partly won by the Poles, whose original plan of establishing a federation composed of the Polish, the Ukrainian, and the Russian Republics,³ miscarried, chiefly through lack of Ukrainian support. It is true that the Russians nearly captured Warsaw and conceived a plan for revolutionising Poland, so that she should become a Soviet Republic which would affiliate with the Soviet Union. But they in their turn were driven back.

The negotiations at Riga were not easy. But it was the chief Russian delegate himself, Joffe, who declared,

1 The Curzon Line had been proposed in 1919 as the eastern boundary 'within which Poland was entitled to maintain an administration,' but without prejudice to her claims to territories further east.

Here the eminent author has made a slight error: the line called Curzon was proposed, in 1920, by the British Government to Poland and the Soviet Union as an armistice line, and not at all as a frontier line.

Moreover, on January 28th, 1920 the Soviet Government made a proposal including the so-called Borysow line—to the east of the frontier line later established during the negotiation at Riga. During the first plenary meeting of the Polish-Soviet peace conference which took place in Minsk the chairman of the Russian delegation, Danishewski, gave the assurance that the Soviet would recognise Poland's independence and sovereignty 'within frontiers wider than those recognized in the well known note by Lord Curzon on July 10th, 1920. This attitude was formulated twice by the Soviet Government in official notes, namely in the note of July 18th, 1920, in answer to the Curzon note, and in a second note signed by Kameniev and presented to the British Foreign Secretary on August 5th, 1920. In this latter note occurs the following paragraph:..... The Russian Government declares yet again that it stands strongly by its recognition of the freedom and independence of Poland, and also of its goodwill to recognize to the Polish State, broader frontiers than those indicated by the Supreme Council, and communicated in the British note of July 20th.

2 Chicherin to Mr. Leslie (Reval), July 18th, 1940.

3 The Soviet Union was not so integrated then as it is now. The Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics had separate delegates under Joffe at Riga.

when the conference was over, that 'the difficulties' were 'especially in the settlement of economic and financial problems'—*not*, therefore, in the settlement of the frontier.

The Russians waived their claim to a frontier more unfavourable to Poland when the Poles agreed to accept a smaller portion of the gold in the former Imperial Bank of Russia. Joffe declared the 'conclusion' of the conference to be 'satisfactory.'¹

At no time was there any Russian protest against the new frontier, which was, indeed, amongst the few of the new European frontiers which was not the object of constant complaint, and of claim and counter-claim. According to an authoritative work, issued by the Soviet State Institute in Moscow, it represents that frontier as relatively unfavourable to Poland because 'Soviet Russia emerged victorious even from this struggle.'²

It is evident that the Russian *Declaration* of January 11th, 1944, in referring to the frontier accepted under the 'Treaty of Riga as an 'injustice' which was 'imposed upon the Soviet Union' is serving a political purpose, rather than presenting historic truth.³

On July, 30th, 1941, when *Russia* herself was attacked by Germany, and in need of all the help she could obtain, she *renounced her claim to Eastern Poland* in an agreement signed by Mr. Maisky and General Sikorski in London. The agreement was endorsed on the same day by the British Government in a note signed by Mr. Eden, stating that Great Britain recognised no territorial changes

1 v. Stainslaw Grabski, *The Polish Soviet Frontier*, p. 35.

2 *The Great Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 46, p. 247.

3 History is further falsified in *Soviet War News* (January 14th, 1944) which, while asserting that Poland refused the Curzon Line during the Russian-Polish War, suppresses the fact that Russia also refused it, and then goes on to say that the Rigo-line was 'forced upon' the Soviet Union.

made in Poland since August, 1939. On July 31st a similar statement was made on behalf of the United States. *The legality of the Polish eastern frontier and the illegality of the claim made in the Russian Declaration are therefore beyond all doubt.*

Why have the Russians disinterred, as it were, the Curzon Line? The reason is plain. The Line bears a respected name. If it became a frontier of the Fourth Partition, it will give that Partition the stamp of respectability.

VI

The *Declaration* refers to the *Union of Polish Patriots* in Russia as offering 'the possibility of the regeneration of Poland,' and denounces the 'emigre' Polish Government in London as 'incapable of establishing friendly relations' with Russia and 'of organising an active struggle against the German invaders in Poland itself.' The significance of these statements will emerge if we consider events in Yugoslavia as well as in Poland.

It was the Russian Government which broke off relations with the Polish Government, merely because the latter had invited the International Red Cross to investigate the fate of 8,300 Polish officers, who had been prisoners of war in Russian captivity, and had vanished in the spring of 1940, when their relatives in Poland ceased receiving any more letters from them. The Russians never accounted for their disappearance — the assertion that they were massacred by the Germans is unconvincing, for the Germans did not invade Russia until the summer of 1941.¹ The Polish request for an enquiry may or may not have been impolitic, but it did not warrant a rupture of diplo-

¹ *The Nineteenth Century and After*, January, 1943.

matic relations—it was the excuse for the rupture, not the cause. The violence and the persistence of the attacks made by Russia in broadcasts and in the press—attacks that have culminated in the *Declaration*—leave no doubt, of her resolve to eliminate the legitimate Polish Government, and to replace it by a Government made up of persons drawn from amongst the *Union of Polish Patriots and maintained under Russian control*. But as long as the legitimate Polish Government is recognised by the other Allies and as long as it has the united support of the Polish people, there can be no Polish Tito—Tito is possible only in a country which, like Yugoslavia, is divided against itself, where a rival to the legitimate government can be set up and find a following.

Nor is Poland in a state of civil war as Yugoslavia is. The Polish 'Secret National Army' is a powerfully organised force which is directed by the Polish Commander-in-Chief. Only in Eastern Poland is there civil war. A partisan movement made up of deserters, a few Polish Communists, perhaps a few Ukrainians, but chiefly parachutists from Russia, has instigated a kind of anarchy in Eastern Poland under the German occupation. But so far it has been unable to create a following for a Polish 'Tito.'

According to the *Declaration*, Poland, while called upon to renounce her Eastern territories, is to acquire 'ancient Polish lands which were wrested from her by the German' and so to 'unite the whole Polish people' and secure an 'outlet to the Baltic sea.' It is not clear what 'lands' are meant, for those she lost to the Germans 'in ancient times' are inhabited by Germans and to acquire them would not be so conducive to Polish unity—unless the German inhabitants are deported. It would seem that

East Prussia is one of the 'lands' which are to be Polish, for on June 18 the Moscow wireless broadcast a statement on the aims of the *Union of Polish Patriots*,¹ who are but instruments of Russian foreign policy. According to this statement, Poland is to receive East Prussia (as the 'outlet to the Baltic,' subsequently referred to in the *Declaration*). But the East Prussians are Germans, indeed intensely so. It would, however, seem that the ethonological principle, which applies to Eastern Poland, does not apply to Western. According to the same broadcast, Poland is to acquire Silesia, which at least has a population that is largely a mixture of Germans and Poles.

The Polish Government has consistently refused to accept the principle of 'compensation'—to sacrifice Polish territory, in return for alien territory. If Poland is entitled to 'compensation'—and she is as much entitled as any of the Allied Powers—it is for loss and injury inflicted upon her by the Germans. For the permanent loss of her own Eastern territories there can be no compensation. *To accept the principle of compensation for their territories would be to attribute legitimacy to an illegitimate act of spoliation.*

Besides, a Poland, immensely weakened by such a loss, would be the more helpless as a neighbour of a vengeful Germany. For the loss of say, 10,000,000 of her own subjects who, White Ruthenian and Ukrainian, as well as Polish, stood against the common foe in 1939, she would acquire, say, five or six million Germans who would rise against her at the first opportunity—or, if deported, would become the principal instigators of a German 'revanche.' To push all Poland westward, as it were, to make her dominate or deport five or six million Germans, is to

1 *Daily Mail*, June 19th, 1943.

establish a permanent state of conflict between Germans and Poles.

It is true that a change in the Status of East Prussia is needed for strategic and political security in Eastern Europe. That is a matter neither for Poland alone, nor for Russia alone, but for the United Nations as a whole to decide. It is for them to invite Poland to carry out whatever may be her share in the general task of maintaining security in Eastern Europe and more particularly, in the Baltic, and, therefore, to assume special obligations with regard to East Prussia.

A mutilated Poland, and one with a Government under Russian control, whether direct or whether indirect in guise of the 'friendly Government' constantly demanded by the Russian Press, *would be a vassal State*, especially if there were no protection against Germany except in the strength of Russia. Russia, on the other hand, would acquire great bargaining power. By holding former German territories in pawn, as it were (with a vassal Poland as a nominal trustee), she would, if a new international situation arose, be able to change her German policy, and transform the balance of power to her and, perhaps, to Germany's advantage.

It is only Poland who is being pressed into conformity with a European order that does not correspond with the declared war aims of the United Nations, least of all with the outlook of the Western democracies. By the desintegration of Yugoslavia, especially of Siberia, the strongest national unit in the Balkans, and by the mutilation and enfeeblement of Rumania as well as of Poland, Czechoslovakia will be completely isolated. Czechoslovak industry has greatly expanded under German rule. When the war is over, Czechoslovakia

trial country in Europe, for German industry will have undergone vast destruction. There is widespread collaboration with the Germans in Czechoslovakia—far more, indeed, than in France. In Poland there is none. Poland, whose 'Secret National Army' is derailing German trains and slowing up German depots and so assisting the advance of the Russian army, is the object of bitter hostility and of disruptive coercion. Czechoslovakia, the most 'collaborationist' of all Allied countries, is the most favoured in Moscow. Poland, the least 'collaborationist' of all, is the least favoured.

But will the opportunism of Dr. Benes profit his own country in the end? According to Article 4 of the Treaty of Czechoslovakia and Russia,¹ 'economic relations will be developed on the largest possible scale, and each party will give each other every economic assistance after the war.' Russia has a Socialist economy, Czechoslovakia an economy that is still largely individualistic. A relationship of the kind denoted in Article 4 of the Treaty, is impossible without a process of economic adaptation—a *Gleichschaltung*, as it were, of the two economic and, to some extent, of the two political systems. If Eastern Poland is annexed, Russia will be a neighbour of Czechoslovakia. If the racial doctrine which is being applied to Poland was applied to the Czechoslovakian Republic, that Republic would be dismembered—one part would become Russian, another German, another Hungarian, while two parts, Slovakia and Bohemia-Moravia, would enjoy a precarious independence.

While Poland and Yugoslavia have been under disruptive pressure, Czechoslovakia has been treated with the utmost consideration. Nevertheless, hardly had the Treaty

1 For Full text v. *The Times*, December 14th, 1943.

with Russia been signed when a warning comes from Moscow. The Czechs were told that their 'National Liberation movement lags behind that of other occupied countries,' although 'the prerequisites for mass guerilla warfare exist,' there is a 'lack of central leadership,' too many Czechs believe that 'liberation from Hitlerite tyranny would come only from without,' and 'the spread of this belief encourages a passive attitude.'¹

If the process perceptible from the Baltic to the Ægean continues, the process, that is to say, by which Czechoslovakia is being isolated and, for the time being, preserved, while Poland and the Balkans are subject to territorial and social disruption, Russia will be master of the central European industrial area—and of much more.

It is said that England cannot afford to quarrel with Russia. And indeed she cannot. Nor can Russia afford to quarrel with England. But it is necessary for England, no less than Russia, to have a clear and positive policy.

Even the annexations already declared by Russia—the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia and Moldavia—represent a tremendous displacement. They mean the total extinction of three countries that enjoyed independence in 1930 (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and the mutilation of two (Poland and Roumania). They would place a population of 22,000,000 Europeans under alien rule. And yet these annexations represent the minimum of Russian demands upon Europe.

Of these countries, Poland is an Ally—the one Ally that remained true when Great Britain stood alone, an Ally whose fate is under the protection of successive pledges made by Great Britain. *But the issue, now, is bigger than the future of Russia, the future of Germany,*

¹ *War and the Working Class* (quoted by *The Daily Worker*, January 3rd, 1943).

the future of Great Britain. The issue is the future of Europe. That is why all Europe is looking on.

“ On March 15th, 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors, representing the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, recognised the frontiers of the Polish Republic, including, specifically, the frontiers as defined in the Treaty of Riga. These eastern frontiers of Poland were recognised by the United States on April 5th of the same year.”

“ On September 28th, 1939, Russia and Germany concluded an agreement, declaring that they ‘ considered it as exclusively their own task to restore peace and order in these territories ’ (*i.e.*, the territories of the Polish Republic) . . . Under *Article 1* of this agreement, the ‘ frontier ’ between the Russian and German ‘ State interests in the territory of the former Polish State ’ was defined (a map being appended). Under *Article 2*, this frontier was recognised as ‘ final ’ by both powers. Under the same *Article* they declared that they would ‘ resist any interference with this decision on the part of other Powers ’.”

“ The *Anglo-Polish Agreement for Mutual Assistance* was signed on August 25th, 1939. Under *Article 1*, Great Britain pledged herself to give ‘ all the support and assistance in her power ’ if Poland were to ‘ become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of aggression by the latter. *Article 2* gave precision to *Article 1*, in so far as Great Britain pledged herself to support

Poland if her independence were threatened ' directly or indirectly ' by a European Power and she ' considered it vital ' to offer armed resistance."

" Great Britain honoured her pledge on September 3rd, 1939, by going to war with Germany. It should be observed that the Anglo-Polish Agreement contains no specific reference to Germany, nor does it specifically pledge either Great Britain or Poland to wage war in defence of the other."

" Russia's title to that region (i.e., Eastern Poland) was never recognised either by Poland herself, or by Great Britain or by the United States, or by any Power except Germany. She was in *de facto* possession of Eastern Poland by virtue of armed conquest and in *de jure* possession only by virtue of the ' Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement.' But she ceased to be even in *de facto* possession when her forces were expelled from Eastern Poland by the Germans. And, of her own free will, she renounced her *de jure* title to Eastern Poland on July 30th, 1941, when an agreement was signed by her Ambassador in London, Mr. Maisky, with the Polish Prime Minister, General Sikorski, at the Foreign Office, with the concurrence of the British Government, represented by Mr. Eden. Russia, under this Agreement, recognised that the changes she had concluded with Germany in 1939 with regard to territorial changes in Poland were invalid. On the same day, the British Government declared in a note to Poland, that Great Britain did not recognise any territorial changes carried out in Poland since August 1939. On July 31, Mr. Sumner Welles made a similar declaration on behalf of the United States."

" The frontiers of the Polish Republic to-day are, *de jure*, what they were in August, 1939. Those frontiers are guaranteed against aggression to-day, as they were

in 1939, by the Anglo-Polish *Agreement of mutual Assistance*." " In the Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Russia, which was signed on May 26th, 1942, both Signatory Powers declare in *Article 5* that ' they will act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandisement for themselves and of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States '. By that Treaty, therefore, Russia reaffirmed her renunciation of her claim to Eastern Poland."

" On June 24th, 1941, Mr. Eden had declared in the House of Commons that, ' The Polish people . . . will redeem their freedom. That remains our pledge.' "

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